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## ***Sadr City's Al Baladi Hospital renovations near completion***

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Al Baladi Hospital's \$12 million renovation project in east Baghdad is nearly complete. [USACE Photo]

Extensive renovations will soon be complete at one of Sadr City's major hospitals in east Baghdad.

Al Baladi Maternity and Children's Hospital initially opened in 1982 and during the following two decades little was spent on routine maintenance, said Iraqi Project Engineer Mohammad Attar, who oversees the hospital's upgrade for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "During Saddam's time, patients there had to tolerate 100-degree-plus interior temperatures because

the air conditioning system was broke," he explained.

The \$12 million, three-year renovation included the installation of four new chillers, four cooling towers and four new boilers. "Those improvements helped the elderly and infants, who have little tolerance for heat and cold. The hospital is now able to maintain a comfortable interior temperature in both summer and winter," Attar noted.

Other improvements include an oxygen



Dr. Akram, one of Al Baladi Hospital's emergency room physicians, said, "Everything is good. You've helped us make some real progress." [USACE Photo]

plant, central vacuum system, nurse call system, intercom paging system, data communications network, new toilets and showers, new exhaust system to remove unhealthy air, new generator for emergency power, medical waste incinerator, and new water purification system.

The medical staff of eight doctors and 30 nurses is treating five times the number of sick people they saw prior to the renovation. They're seeing 150 to 200 patients daily, 80 percent of which are children.

Their obstetric department is delivering 30 to 40 newborns every day. "One of their main goals is reducing the infant mortality rate and the new equipment is making a difference," Attar said. The two-story hospital has a bed capacity for 200 patients.

More than 100 Iraqis have been part of the construction crew. They installed a new roof, put in new plumbing and electrical, rebuilt the physicians' family-size apartments, added a new cafeteria area and kitchen, new lighting, new plastering, redid all the floors and ceilings, new surgical theater suite and x-ray equipment.

"It's truly rewarding to know we've helped some of the poorest people in Baghdad," Attar said. "They were tolerating absolutely horrible conditions. The toilets were overflowing, the air was stagnant, the medical equipment was outdated and much of it didn't work. Despite ongoing insurgency threats, the contractor kept making steady progress. Today, Sadr City families have a modern facility and access to equipment that was simply not available three years ago. We're all proud to have been a part of the effort."



Al Baladi Maternity and Children's Hospital treats 150 to 200 patients daily, 80 percent of which are children. (U.S. Army photo by Norris Jones)

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